

EXTENSION

ACTS 8.5-25

I. Context

A. Messenger/Missionary

1. Following the death of Stephen by stoning, the church of Jerusalem, especially those who were Hellenistic Jewish converts, were scattered to the surrounding areas of Palestine, some going at least as far as Cyprus.
2. But they didn't just move away from Jerusalem, they moved to the mission field, because **verse 4** says...
3. The word "preaching" is the word "evangelizing." They were "messengers of the good" news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were busy preaching the word as they went, wherever they went, to whomever they met.
4. One of those who joined in the dispersion of Christians was Philip
 - a. One of the seven leaders selected by the church to handle the distribution of food to the Hellenistic widows.
 - b. Filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom.

B. Method Verses 5-7

1. Preaching – in verse 5 different from verse 4.
 - a. Refers to a herald – In classical Greek, *a public servant who summoned the ecclesia (gathering of the community of citizens) to read or announce messages of state, such as current laws or a declaration of war.*
 - b. This word for preach speaks more of the method than the content.
 - c. Wherever Philip went, he gathered a crowd and preached unto them
2. Signs and wonders

- a. Like his Master Jesus, his mentors the Apostles, and other missionaries like Stephen before him
 - 1) Cast out demons
 - 2) Healed the lame
- b. Philip was apparently a powerful preacher
 - 1) His words seemed to be as miraculous as his actions
 - 2) **Verse 6 *hearing and seeing the miracles which he did***
- c. Dual purpose in miracles
 - 1) Draws attention of the crowd so that they can hear the word
 - 2) Confirmed the message of the word and the authority of the messenger
 - 3) Never meant to draw attention to the messenger or the miracles themselves

C. Message Verses 5, 12

1. He preached "the Christ" - Messiah **1 Cor. 2.2; 15.3-6**
2. Kingdom of God
 - a. Not just a synonym for the gospel
 - b. Philip preached the sovereignty of God over all of creation in opposition to the works and teachings of men like Simon Magus, whom we will meet in a moment.
3. Name of Jesus Christ
 - a. His message included the full revelation of Jesus Christ
 - 1) Jesus – earthly ministry
 - 2) Christ – His divine office as the Son of God – His deity
 - b. Jesus Christ is the King of the kingdom of God

D. Matter of Simon the Sorcerer Verses 9-11

1. Sorcerer – a lower sort of magician who preyed on the superstitions of the people
2. We need to realize that simply because something is spiritual does not mean it is from God.
 - a. The works of Simon were not tricks and deception – not sleight of hand
 - b. They were very real works which found their power in spirits other than those of Heaven
3. Astonished the people with his works of sorcery until they said of him, “**This man is the great power of God.**”
 - a. Not only attentive to what he did and said
 - b. Willing to obey him because they
 - c. Believed him and accepted what he said and did as real things
 - d. They “**all gave heed**” (v. 10) – from every age and every walk of life

II. Conversion

A. Celebration Verses 6-8

1. Yet when Philip began to preach the truth of the word of God, the people “all gave heed” to his teaching.
2. These miracles were not like those of Simon and Philip’s message was so much more powerful than that of Simon’s.
3. The reaction of the people to the message was “great joy” all throughout the city.
4. **Verse 12** The people responded to the message of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ
5. **Verse 13** Philip responded to the signs and miracles
6. He followed Philip around trying to learn the secret of the miracles that Philip performed.

B. Confirmation Verses 14-17

1. Word filtered back to Jerusalem.
2. Church elected Peter and John to check out
3. The harvest Jesus had talked about in John 4
4. Confirmed

v. 35 ...*lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!*

 - a. To converts
 - 1) They were truly part of the kingdom of God
 - 2) Jesus is the Christ – the true Messiah
 - b. To church at Jerusalem
 - 1) Salvation not restricted to Jews
 - 2) Peter & John probably as surprised as any that the kingdom was available to the Samaritans.
5. Actions
 - a. Prayed for them
 - b. Laid hands on them
 - c. Holy Spirit came upon them

C. Confusion

1. Confusion in the minds of some Christians about the delay between salvation and baptism
 - a. Not a precedent
 - b. Danger in trying to build doctrine based on historical events
 - c. What happens once does not have to happen every time.
 - d. Delay
 - e. God’s plan to confirm to the church that the gospel message was intended for the world – not just the Jews.
 - f. This would not be the last time that Peter and the church would be astonished at people other than Jews being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

2. Confusion in minds of some between gift of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit

- a. Gift of the Holy Spirit – seal, earnest, guarantee that the life they have received from Christ is eternal.

Eph. 1:13-14

- b. Gifts of the Holy Spirit – the way the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to carry out the mission of the church.
3. Confusion in the mind and heart of Simon Magus
 - a. Apparently there were some accompanying signs that proved to those who observed that these believers had, in fact, received the Holy Spirit.
 - b. So amazed Simon, he determined to be part of the show himself.
 - c. Asked how much it would cost for him to purchase this power.
 - d. Not blasphemy – which could never be forgiven – but ignorance.
 - e. Still, it led to a confrontation between Simon and the Apostle Peter.

III. Confrontation Verses 18-24

- A. Evidence for understanding that the belief of Simon was not a belief that led to salvation.
- B. Mental assent is not enough to assure that one's heart has been converted. There is so much more to the word "believe" that just agreeing that something is true.

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble!

John Piper re "believe" (paraphrased from *Desiring God*, p.54, 55)

We are surrounded by unconverted people who think they *do* believe in Jesus. Drunks on the street say they believe. Drug dealers say they believe in Jesus.

Unmarried couples sleeping together say they believe. Elderly people who haven't sought worship or fellowship for forty years say they believe. All kinds of lukewarm, world-loving church attenders say they believe.

But can you say that you treasure Him more than everything? Do you "delight yourself in the Lord"? Those who truly believe in Jesus are able to say along with the Apostle Paul...

Phil. 3.8 I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

- C. In our study of *Experiencing God* this past week, our memory verse came from the Gospel of John.

John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.

John 14:23 If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

John 15:14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

- D. Simon only believed in what he could gain from this relationship with Christ.
 1. He sought to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit.
 2. He believed that the Holy Spirit could be "subjected to the will of man."
 3. He was more interested in the gifts than in the Gift Giver.
- E. Philip seems to have accepted Simon's confession of faith at face value, but
- F. Peter recognized his insincerity immediately.

Verses 19-21

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

1. Instantly condemned Simon and
2. Recognized that, while Simon may have made a mental assent to the truth of Christ, his heart had never been converted.
3. Saw that Simon was “poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”
 - a. His heart had not been set free from the bondage of sin and iniquity.
 - b. His heart was as full as ever of “dreadful, malignant sin.”

Jer. 4:18 *Your ways and your doings Have procured these things for you. This is your wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reaches to your heart.*

Proverbs 5:22 *His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin.*

- G.** Simon even condemned himself to a degree.
1. Someone who knows Jesus as Savior also knows the Holy Spirit. **1 John 4.13**
 2. Simon did not have the Holy Spirit and admitted as such by thinking that he could purchase the power that accompanies the presence of the Holy Spirit.
(**Simony** – trying to buy ones way into righteousness. TV preachers who promote health and wealth theology are as guilty as Simon – even more so since they know better. At least Simon did what he did out of ignorance.)
- H.** Just because someone says they are a Christian or that they believe in Christ is not enough.
1. Those who believe will worship Him, they will obey Him, and they will join themselves to the body of believers.
 2. Where there is faith and belief there will also be obedience.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

- I.** Peter not only called attention to the current status of Simon’s heart as wicked, but even made reference to his eternal destiny: “**Thy money perish with thee**” (v. 20).
Those who die in their sin have but one destiny and that is to perish apart from God for all of eternity.
- J.** This was a serious matter and Peter did not leave it there. He went on to tell Simon what he needed to do next if he were to escape the judgment of God.

Verse 22.

1. Believing is not sufficient for salvation apart from repentance.
Or maybe a better way to say it is that part of believing is repentance – a turning away from the path of sin to the highway that leads to glory.
2. Peter encouraged Simon in the strongest terms possible to call on God and see if maybe he might find forgiveness for such a heinous sin.

IV. Conclusion Verses 24-25

- A.** The Bible does not tell us if Simon ever prayed such a prayer.
1. Leaves us with the fact that Simon asked Peter to pray for him.
 - a. As far as we know from the biblical record, Peter never does pray for Simon as Simon asked.
 - b. Peter knew that the only conversation that would ever lead to the salvation of Simon was the one that took place between Simon and God.
 - c. Several times in the story of the Exodus Pharaoh asked Moses to pray for him and for the removal of the plagues that God had brought on Egypt. The Bible says that Moses did pray for Pharaoh, but at no time did Pharaoh ever repent.
- B.** The mission carried on. **Verse 25**